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ABSTRACT

Theorizing in adult education has been primarily concerned with questions of social philosophy which contribute little to improving the quality of professional activity. This essay suggests a rationale and strategy for developing a research based body of theory, indigenous to adult education and of practical utility to practitioners. Central to the reality upon which such theory must be constructed is a presupposition that an individual constructs meaning through an active process of interaction with others and directs his behavior accordingly. Educational process is an organized effort to assist an individual to construct meanings in a way by which he will be more effective in solving problems. (Fifteen references are included.) (author/ly)

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TOWARD A THEORY OF PRACTICE IN EDUCATION

WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE EDUCATION OF ADULTS

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There are few more pervasively debilitating influences in the professional field of adult education - or in all of education - than the absence of a body of practically useful theory upon which priorities in research, program development, evaluation and professional training may be predicated. Theorizing has been almost entirely limited to social philosophy given largely to refining differences in emphasis between those contending major focus should be placed either upon educational processes involved in group interaction and community development or on more orthodox forms of teaching adults about the culture with emphasis on liberal arts and the humanities. The continuing dialogue has contributed little toward improving the quality of professional activity. This chapter suggests a rationale and strategy for the systematic development of an integrated body of inductively formulated generalizations with which adult educators can understand and predict behavior of adults in educational situations. What is proposed is research-based qualitative theory, indigenous to adult education and capable of indicating dependable and practical guidelines for policy and program decision making. Although the following comments address adult educators, they pertain with equal relevance to educators working at other levels.

In the absence of theory suited to the particular uses of adult education as a professional field, research effort has been fragmented. It has either been atheoretical or "factual", as in the case of much survey research, "conceptual", organizing or critically appraising existing facts, as in historical or philosophical research, or it has attempted to test logical deductions from a priori assumptions, either general formulations from "the literature" of some element of formal theory borrowed from an authority in the fields of psychology or sociology. Results have been either too particularized or generalized to provide practical guidance to practitioners.

Brunner's[1] major review of research found most studies limited to descriptions of experience in a single program or community or to analyses of local situations as the basis for program prescription with findings seldom applicable beyond the institution studied. The 600 empirical studies summarized deal largely with such "correlates" of successful practice as interests and motivation, characteristics of participants and leaders and roles of adult educators. The poverty of yield of this body of research is illustrated by such chapter summary statements as:

> . . .research shows (1) that the situation and the problems inherent in it must be taken into account along with the objectives, interests and needs of people; (2) that the participation of local people in developing the program. . . should be secured; and (3) that the planning itself should become an educational process.
>
> The role of the adult educator is . . . (a) better programs, (b) accurate knowledge of the organization and its purposes, (c) training and experience to develop skills necessary for effective participation.
>
> Adult education . . .must deal with well-developed, subjectively meaningful motivations in relation to complex social influences and social values . . .

Such banal generalizations afford little guidance to an administrator trying to develop a program of adult basic education in a ghetto, a community development trainer designing a program for local leaders on urban school decentralization or a leader of a discussion group on foreign policy. The dubious relevance of much empirical research for policy and program decision making in education reflects the lack of a

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1 Brunner, Edmund deS., David S. Wilder, Corinne Kirchner and John S. Newberry, Jr. An Overview of Adult Education Research. Chicago: Adult Education Association, 1959.

theoretical framework in which research priorities may be ordered and is a function of uncritical philosophical assumptions and collateral methodological problems.

These limitations have been placed into sharp relief by sociologist Herbert Blumer[2] whose writing and teaching has for several years attempted to refocus attention on root epistomological ideas of pragmatism with profound and profoundly neglected research implications. This neglect among educators is difficult to understand in light of their general acceptance of the writings of John Dewey and George Herbert Mead. In strongly reasserting the essential centrality of the pragmatic concept of meaning in the formation of behavior, Blumer provides us with the foundation stone in constructing a theory indigenous to education.

Social scientists and educational researchers have generally tended to treat human behavior as the product of a rich variety of abstractions such as attitudes, motives, perception and cognition, cultural norms and values, social roles, status demands, social position and group affiliation. For Blumer, the common fallacy is attribution by researchers of behavioral causality to such factors without due recognition of a critical mediating process, viz., the individual actively assigning meaning to his situation.

Epistemological Foundations for Educational Theory

The point underscored is the distinctive pragmatic position on philosophical determinism. It negates a commonly accepted interpretation amo g social scientists that meaning is somehow intrinsic to the thing that has it and so may be recognized without involving the process of

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2 The comprehensive statement is to be found in his Symbolic Interactionism; Perspective and Metho .Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1969,

a person constructing meanings. Pragmatism similarly disallows a competing notion that meaning is but the expression of an individual's attitudes, feelings, memories, sensations and ideas evoked by his perception of a thing with the collateral suggestion that meaning of an object can be explained by isolating the particular psychological elements which produce it.

Opposing these views of the nature of meaning is the position of symbolic interactionism which holds that the meaning of an object - be it an animate or inanimate physical object, a category of people, institution, ideal, activity or situation - arises out of the ways others act toward the person with regard to that object in the process of human interaction. Thus an individual constructs meaning through an active process of interpreting what is going on in his situation. Meanings emerge out of human interaction as rules or habits of action. They are evoked by concrete objects which can be identified as symbols. Gestures, facial expressions, or spoken words become symbols when the person making them is able to respond to them from the standpoint of other people. Symbols can be used only when we play the role of other people and anticipate their reaction to what we say and do. George Herbert Mead understood mind to be the capacity to make gestures and respond to them from the standpoint of the "generalized other." We become selves only through this identification with others.

The dynamics of this process is one in which the person engages in communication with himself to identify the meaning things have for him. He then interprets by selecting, suspending and transforming these meanings to fit the particular situational context and directs his action accordingly. Meanings are used and revised as instruments for determining behavior.

This is the crux of Blumer's concern. Mainstream social and educational researchers commonly ascribe changes in behavior to such presumed initiating or predisposing factors as motives, attitudes, unconscious complexes, role requirements, situational demands, psychological process or organization or some combination of these. The objective of their research is to link behavior to the initiating agent. Given the difficulty of firmly fixing causality, we have a plethora of empirical studies in adult education indentifying "correlates" of behavior change.

The broad jump from presumed causative factor to behavioral effect spans the very essence of educational process. The principal thrust of research in education, following the lead of its foundational disciplines, psychology and sociology, has by-passed the very process of growth itself - the interaction with self and others by which an individual learns to cope with his world, engages in problem solving and changes his behavior.

Attention has been diverted from the critical role the individual plays in determining the course of his own behavior by interpreting the meaning of his situation in response to reactions and anticipated reactions of others. By taking into account such considerations the effects of motives, attitudes, role requirements, and other such influences may be checked or suspended, intensified, revised, abandoned or displaced. A practical theory of adult education will focus on the process of social interaction within the learning situation to "get inside of the defining process" of those involved with each other in the educational enterprise.

Such theory will explain the ways adult participants, instructors or trainers, change agents, program administrators and others who are part of the action interact among themselves and each other to form and use meaning. It will concern itself centrally with interaction process in the group life of the educational institution which creates, supports and changes its norms,

values and social rules rather than focus upon these constructs at the expense of interaction process. Practical theory will especially recognize that educational institutions function as a result of people taking joint action, behaving in certain ways as a result of their definition of the situation in which they find themselves, not as response to some inherent "systems" requirement. Its crucial concepts must be verifiable by research. Historical precedent and continuity involved in joint action should be systematically embodied in theory.

Methodological Problems

Having identified the focus for theory building, the adult educator must look critically at the limitations of the various methods by which the educational process may be studied.

Research in adult education has commonly been used in attempting to verify some kind of theoretical assumption, however particularized in one program or situation or foreign in origin and awkwardly fit to adult education. Moreover, social science methodology itself has frequently led to serious distortions of the real world being analyzed. Blumer identifies three common sources of this distortion. One is the lack of a mechanism to correct false premises, wrongly defined problems, distorted data, concepts and false interpretation of relationships in using standard protocols of research. Adherence to these familiar protocols and procedures has often become the measure of excellence of the research undertaking to the point when mastery of form has led to a kind of casuistry. Researchers have not usually involved themselves intimately into the situations they are studying to attempt to understand the perspectives of those involved and the dynamics of their interaction. Samples are drawn, questionnaires constructed, laboratory situations concocted, computer

similations programmed, chi square formulas dusted off, frequently without personal involvement by the researcher into the field reality he expects to study. Relating the results of even the best of these efforts to realities of program or policy decision making requires feats of acrobatic extrapolation.

Another methodological problem pertains to the testing of hypotheses to establish empirical validity of a theoretical assertion. To do this two conditions must obtain but are seldom honored in practice: the hypothesis must be so central to a theory or model that its success or failure may be equated with that of the theory it represents, and it must hold up in a wide range of other relevant empirical situations. Because these two conditions are seldom met, unverified theory continues unchallenged whether or not hypotheses drawn from them fail to stand up. Blumer cites such examples as the doctrine of instincts, Watsonian behaviorism, Gestalt Psychology, the stimulus-response conception, psychoanalysis, the input-output model, the organic conception of human society, cultural determinism, and structural functionalism. He concludes, "There are grave grounds, merely on the basis of the record, for doubting the efficacy of . . . this procedure [the testing of hypotheses], in social and psychological sciences, in establishing the empirical validity of premises, problems, data, relations, concepts and interpretations."[3]

A final and often more flagrant violence is done reality by researchers who hasten to "operationalize" a concept or theory. For educators this commonly involves development of an "instrument" such as test, scale or questionnaire, tested for reliability and used to delineate data considered to be valid empirical referents of the concept or theory operationalized.

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3. Ibid., p. 30

> The use of intelligence tests is a classic example of operational procedure -- the tests are reliable and standardized instruments; they yield clean-cut empirical data capable of replication; and the data (the intelligence quotients) can be justly regarded as constituting sound and valid empirical references of the concept of intelligence. Actually, a little careful reflection shows that operational procedure is not at all an empirical validation of what is being operationalized. The concept of proposition that is being operationalized, such as the concept of intelligence, refers to something that is regarded as presenting the empirical world in diverse forms and in diverse settings. Thus, as an example, intelligence is seen in empirical life as present in such varied things as the skillful military planning of an army general, the ingenious exploitation of a market situation by a business entrepreneur, effective methods of survival by a disadvantaged slum dweller, the clever meeting of the problems of his world by a peasant or a primitive tribesman, the cunning of low-grade delinquent-girl morons in a detention home, and the construction of telling verse by a poet. It should be immediately clear how ridiculous and unwarranted it is to believe that the operationaliring of intelligence through a given intelligence test yields a satisfactory picture of intelligence. To form an empirically satisfactory picture of intelligence, a picture that may be taken as having empirical validation, it is necessary to catch and study intelligence as it is in play in actual empirical life instead of relying on a specialized and usually arbitrary selection of one area of its presumed manifestation.[4]

If a theoretical assertion to be operationalized refers to something existing in the real world, representative forms of that phenomena must be studied; studying only one form of an empirical reference by operationalizing and assuming its full empirical coverage is so common as to make operationalism a dubious means of theoretical validation.

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4. Ibid., p. 31

Blumer's critique leads him to call for a return to direct and disciplined field examination through first hand acquaintance with the sphere of group life to be studied. Participants in adult education enterprises - administrators, instructors, students, interested community leaders and others involved- constitute the principals of a distinctive small universe of interaction particularly important for study because its reason for being is itself the analysis of meanings and the process of their formulation to influence behavior change. Any theory which seeks to influence educational effort on an operational level must focus upon the process in which people meeting in this context indicate sequences of action to each other and interpret indications made by others. It must recognize that in doing so people are not merely acting out attitudes, emotions, conscious motivations, ideas, drives, norms, values, status prescriptions. or psychological mechanisms but rather are actively ". . . directing, checking, bending, and transforming their lines of action in the light of what they encounter in the actions of others."

To influence this process of action, adult educators must come to see people, institutions, ideals, activities of others and individual encounters as the various participants in the adult education enterprise see them. Standardized research methodologies of education and social science have proven less than adequate in providing these qualitative insights. Efforts to fit research technology to educational process has frequently resulted in what Whitehead called "the fallacy of misplaced concreteness." Principles of bureaucracy, institutions, organizations and systems which arbitrarily predetermine which aspects of reality shall be delineated for study should not be permitted to obscure the central task

of understanding the ways participants in adult education enterprises define, interpret and react to the situations in which they are involved. Identification and analysis of the resulting interactions provide the most potentially useful picture of adult education as an organized activity. As Blumer observes, "Beneath the norms and rules that specify the type of action to be engaged in at any given point in the organizational complex there are two concurrent processes in which people are defining each other's perspectives and the individual, through self-interaction, is redefining his own perspective." It is this process of growth through problem solving which educators seek to facilitate and make more effective.

Practical theory must be constructed and tested by research methods which avoid the distortion of this educational process. While it should when feasible be formulated in ways conducive to quantification, quantitative analysis is not a condition to either its validity, reliability nor its utility. In the past, use has not been accorded the status of a major criterion in theory building and testing. A practical theory of education would assert the primacy of utility along with validity and reliability as essential conditions of inclusion.

Methodological Foundations for Educational Theory

A methodology for developing the needed practical theory of adult education is suggested by Glaser and Strauss.[5] Although addressing colleagues in sociology, their ideas have particular import for adult education and the other professions. Their theme is that theory should be generated from data systematically obtained and analyzed from social research, utilizing a general method of comparative analysis. This

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5. Glaser, Barney G. and Anselm L. Strauss. The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1967.

constitutes a radical departure from traditional uses of research in the social sciences and education which has been almost exclusively concerned with verification of theory. Theory construction in educational psychology has commonly been confined to attempts at reconstructing shards of reality by testing hypotheses concerning some specific aspect of behavior which catches the eye of the investigator. This "building block" approach to theory building has seldom yielded integrated conceptions of behavior which themselves may be tested for validity. Reviews of research reflect the disjointed, unrelated and segmented views of a broader reality; it is as though one views reality as reflected in a prism-shaped mirror. The whole is no more than the sum of its parts, each part only dimly adumbrated by a partial description of some of its attributes. The researcher reads and reports "related research" but delimits his definition of what is related to specific reconstructions of reality most obviously and narrowly relevant to the particular he plans to investigate. As he has no comprehensive and dependable theory of reality within which research priorities may be assigned priority in further deliniating relatively unchartered areas, he feels no constraint on arbitrarily deciding which questions are the important ones. Who, after all, is to say which building block may someday prove of value in the millennium when some gifted theoretian will synthesize all this tested data into a broader conception of reality? Meanwhile, educational practitioners are obliged to cope with problems requiring decision making as best they can.

In sociology often there has been a proclivity to view theory construction as the exclusive province of established authorities, "great men" whose genius set them apart to engage in such creative effort;

research has been largely devoted to testing the "grand" theories of this intellectual elite, but almost never so as decisively to prove or disprove their validity.

Glaser and Strauss challenge this logico-deductive tradition of theorizing. They contend that theory should be generated through a process of social research, one in which most hypotheses and concepts are not only derived from data but are systematically developed in relation to that data. They see as the functions of theory:

> (1) to enable prediction and explanation of behavior; (2) to be useful in theoretical advance . . .; (3) to be usable in practical applications-prediction and explanation should be able to give the practitioner understanding and some control of situations; (4) to provide a perspective on behavior-a stance to be taken toward data; and (5) to guide and provide a style for research on particular areas of behavior. Thus theory is a strategy for handling data in research, providing modes of conceptualization for describing and explaining.[6]

Theory grounded in data from research involves the development of conceptual categories readily applicable to and indicated by the data and relevant to an explanation of the behavior under study. This means a research approach which goes into the field, free of pre-determined theoretical constraints, to construct analytical categories out of qualitative similarities and differences which emerge from study of several similiar situations, such as inner-city

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6. Ibid., p. 3.

adult basic education programs, university extension credit programs, residential programs on public affairs, community development training programs for indigenous local leaders, great books discussion groups, etc.

To have practical utility for program planning, development, evaluation, research and training, adult education theory must involve just such an integrated body of useful concepts inductively derived from comparative qualitative analysis of similar types of organized group effort. Conceptual categories must "fit" (be readily applicable to and indicated by the data under study) and "work" (relevant and able to explain the behavior under study). Such "substantive" theory (developed for a substantive or empirical area of inquiry such as education or adult education) would intensively examine comparable adult education enterprises over time Field methods, and especially participant observation, specifically oriented to theory building, would be utilized to study the process of interaction involving administrators, staff, participants and others involved in each of several comparable programs. Similarities and differences among programs constitute the basis for conceptualizing categories which disengage the generic nature of the process and for analysis of their distinctive properties or attributes. Conceptual categories become integrated into a theoretical framework firmly grounded in the dynamics of on-going process.

This approach calls for the researcher continually to test the validity of his emerging conceptual categories against comparable situations under study. Thus hypotheses generated by data are tested against comparable field experience and reformulated as a broader sampling of experience may suggest. Although the principal source of data is through direct observation and interviewing in the field, the

investigator will commonly supplement this with data from historical records, letters and diaries, life histories, public records, the published writing of colleagues, arranged group discussions and review of relevant personal experience. He may even borrow theoretical concepts from others to interpret or elaborate his emergent conceptual categories as generated from these sources. The vast accumulation of program descriptions and case studies in adult education literature can be put to valuable use by the researcher winnowing them for particular data relevant to his evolving conceptual categories. Glaser and Strauss make necessary a redefinition of theory as prematurely formulated. Helpin and Griffiths have urged educators to generally accept Feigl's definition of theory as " . . . a set of assumptions from which can be derived by purely logico-mathematical procedures a larger set of empirical laws" and of scientific explanation as ". . .more specific or more descriptive statements . . . derived from more general or more hypothetical assumptions."[7] Grounded theory constitutes no set of assumptions but rather an integrated body of generalizations of various levels of abstraction, continually in process of refinement and restatement through testing against an ever broader segment of reality. Scientific explanation is based upon the derivation of more general and less hypothetical concepts from more specific observations. It is true that research in grounded theory is built upon presuppositions about what constitute productive points of departure for study. As Strauss explains elsewhere in this volume, the researcher does not approach his task without a general frame of reference. But Griffiths defines the assumptions in

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7. Quoted in Daniel E. Griffiths, "The Nature and Meaning of Theory" in Behaviorial Science and Educational Administration, National Society for the Study of Education Yearbook, Part II, 1964, pp. 96-99

Fiegl's definition to mean something one should strive to create ". . . which explains a law in the most elegant and most parsimonious, the neatest, most revealing, and the most relevant fashion possible."[8] John Stuart Mills came closer to a germane definition with his observation that "theory means the completed result of philosophical induction from experience." Its relevance for adult educators is to enable them to understand and predict the behavior of adults in educational situations.

Elements in the orienting framework with which the researcher engaged in theory construction approaches the field are defined by Strauss in another chapter of this present volume as "processual units." His examples include careers of individuals, idealogies of groups of persons, formation and implementations of plans, relationships, group or institutional structures, power relationships and relationships with external groups or organizations. Strauss' processual units are analogues to what Lazarfeld calls "sensitizing concepts" and Blumer refers to as "analytical elements." These may be processes, organization, relations, networks or relations, states of being, elements of personal organization or happenings. Other examples might include assimilation, social mobility, institutional commitment, bureaucratic relationships, authority systems, leadership and for adult education - marginality, program coordination, change agent-client relationship, school-community relations, group problem solving process, program development, inter alia.

Becker, Geer and Hughes develop a somewhat more detailed framework for undertaking their field study of undergraduate students at

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8. Op. Cit.

the University of Kansas. They chose to study college life from the viewpoint of students because this was the best way to find out what influences student behavior. They write, "If we do not see it as they do - as a dense network of social relationships, institutional demands and constraints, and temporarily connected contingencies - we will not be able to understand what they do."[9]

The organizing concept they employ is "perspective"[10] defined as:

> . . . a coordinated set of ideas and actions a person uses in dealing with some problematic situation, . . . a person's ordinary way of thinking and feeling about and acting in such a situation. These thoughts and actions are coordinated in the sense that the actions flow reasonably, from the actor's perspective, from the ideas contained in the perspective. Similarly, the ideas can be seen by an observer to be one of the possible sets of ideas which might form the underlying rationale for the person's actions and are seen by the actor as providing a justification for acting as he does.[11]

Perspective is made up of descriptions of people's actions and statements of the ideas that go with these actions. Its components include: (1) Definition of the Situation - an understanding of what the world is like and the level of importance attributed to various features of the situation including what it allows one to do, insists he do, why he is in the situation and what he can reasonably get out of it; (2) Activities one may properly and reasonably engage in given the situation: (a) actions taken to gather information about the environment such as expectations of others, how one is meeting these demands, how one is regarded, rewards and punishments one can expect and (b) actions taken to meet expectations of others, both institutional and

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9. Becker, Howard S., Blanche Geer and Everett Hughes. Making the Grade: The Academic Side of College Life. N.Y.: John Wiley and Sons, 1968, p.2

10. Ibid., Ch. III

11. Ibid., p.5

informal; and (3) Criteria of Judgment - standards of value against which people are judged, such as instructors, administrators, students, others, one's self. The Definition of the Situation has four major features: statement of goals for which one may reasonably strive, description of the organizations within which action occurs and their demands made upon participants, formal and informal rules by which action is constrained and rewards and punishments.

An educator cannot help but speculate upon the advantage which might accrue from identifying Dewey's familiar "Pattern of Inquiry," (problem definition, identification of hypotheses, anticipating their consequences, making an action decision, implementing it and assessing the effect of doing so) as the "processual unit" for studying learning group behavior under the "Activities" rubric delineated above.

Practical Implications of Grounded Theory

Glaser and Strauss suggest bold new vistas for the development of the professional field of adult education. These implications touch research, program development, evaluation and training. They suggest a way in which adult educators may broadly participate in significant research. Able practitioners can learn the skills of field observation and interview and use their unique professional experience to identify processual units, creatively generate theoretical constructs from research data and analyze their key properties. In generating grounded theory they may move purposively beyond research description and academic *rechauffes* of old studies without the unrealistic expectation that they will have the resources to undertake highly sophisticated quantitative analyses possibly relevent to testing theory but not necessarily to its generation. For adult education is a field which does not have an indige-

nous theory from which to set its priorities and provide a tested body of generalizations which might constitute a useful, reliable and valid statement of "the state of the art".

Its first task is to develop one. This will be no small effort. With enlightened leadership by professors of adult education, theory building could, however, increasingly become an integral element in our professional endeavor, a distinctive function beyond the responsibility of creative programming which distinguishes adult education professionals from other practitioners in the field. Grounded theory invites adult educators to capitalize upon their own experience as the basis for analysis of comparative field situations, to draw upon their own professional library of researched description to supplement field observations in constructing and analyzing conceptual theoretical categories. The methodology provides for the possibility of a division of labor: those preferring library research may profitably look to printed sources for data; others may generate theory from direct field experience. Theory which explains and predicts need not take the form of a neat formalized set of integrated principles but may evolve from a continuing theoretical dialogue using conceptual categories and their properties among specialists working in various sub-fields of adult education.

This approach provides a strategy for incrementally developing a needed research map setting logical priorities for a systematic and coordinated effort at theory building. In terms of program planning and development, there would be obvious and substantial advantages for a new administrator of adult basic education programs in a practical and reliable body of theory based upon a broad comparative

study of practice and perspectives of students, staff and administrators.[12] Without such theoretical framework inductively derived and indigenous to adult education, research will continue to be fragmented and of dubious utility to program and policy decision makers and the common experience of the field will continue to be appropriately viewed as folk wisdom of dubious reliability and validity in new situations. The adult education planner, administrator, instructor or trainer and program evaluator will continue to have to rely for guidance upon their own experience or, through serendipity, that gleaned from occasional professional meetings or journals.

Program evaluation in all the social professions is a venal art dominated by an almost hypnotic fixation upon original written statements of program objective, usually loosely and broadly stated by a proposal writer who is seldom subsequently involved in program implementation. The program evaluator is ideally expected to operationalize these statements into an instrument or set of criteria for objectively measuring progress against benchmarks set earlier by application of the same instrument. The central problem is a misconception of the nature of objectives. They must be understood as anticipations of possible continuity or of the connection of an activity and a consequence which has not yet shown itself. Objectives, like all ideas, ideals or theories must be tested by the operation of acting upon them. They are incorrectly perceived as definitive statements of what is to be. More accurately, they are highly tentative assertions about probabilities of changing behavior subject to continuous revision and

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12. There is a first attempt currently being made at Teachers College to construct grounded theory in adult education by a study of inner-city adult basic education programs in six major cities The study is being undertaken by the writer with the collaboration of Alan Knox and Gordon Darkenwald (Teachers College, Columbia University), and Anselm Strauss (University of California), Lee Rainwater (Harvard), and Eugene Litwak (University of Michigan). Blanche Geer (Northeastern University) will serve as project evaluator.

expansion as experience in implementing them is analyzed. The established practice of treating objectives as immutable criteria for measuring progress is oblivious to the fact that objectives which guide actions invariably evolve out of the interaction of often quite disparate and evolving expectations of the principal actors in the program including planners, administrators, staff and participants or students. Values and objectives continuously emerge and are revised in the course of the educational transaction.

Any new endeavor in education involves phases of development - deciding what is to be done, finding the resources to do it, setting up an organization, establishing administrative procedures, relating to other agencies and organizations, recruiting, selecting and orienting staff, program planning and scheduling, developing instructional procedures and materials, recruiting and selecting participants or students, beginning instruction, coping with operating problems, assessing progress and instituting change, institutionalizing the endeavor, etc. Within each of these overlapping functional phases and as each moves into the next, objectives are reformulated by those involved, tested against experience and modified, reinforced or abandoned, depending upon whether or not they work in reality. The explicit formulation of objectives for each phase of organizational and program development would be a step forward but only if these statements are recognized as hypotheses being continuously modified as a result of the process of experience. Objectives must themselves be understood to be processual in nature.

This understanding is critically important in assessing progress in adult education programs designed to serve the local community or the poor. In point of fact, traditional organizational and program structures have

not been designed to work in these areas and staff has not been professionally trained to do so. The erroneous assumption by funding agencies that they can expect to measure progress toward initially stated training program objectives involving specific behavior change without investing in building the specialized organizational infrastructure required to support the programs funded has been endemic and has resulted in mutual disappointment. Under pressure of the Bureau of the Budget, the Office of Economic Opportunity, for example, has forced upon universities and other newly established training centers involved in Community Action Programs a kind of input-output accounting procedure for reporting dollar cost per training day. The substantial and essential investment required for building institutional capability must be buried in program training costs for each year of operation, even including the first and second. For institutions of higher education, the assumption by federal agencies is one of instant performance, as though a class- and credit-oriented extension program were merely being funded to add half a dozen additional courses rather than to undertake what for most institutions involves a whole new set of objectives, organizational structure, clientele and area of staff experience. This, until very recently, has also been the self-defeating approach under Title I of the Higher Education Act.

There is a common misconception among government officials which deprecates and confuses professional competence - the capacity to draw upon a wide range of relevant professional experience to creatively solve new problems - with technical expertise in a specialized area of agency interest. Because government agencies are always under pressure to show quantitative results per dollar invested per year (in part due to their

annual budget review by Congress), few find it feasible to set objectives which include building necessary organizational infrastructure to achieve program goals. They hope for a free ride by piggybacking on already established organizations, programs and technical expertise. In the case of community development and working with the poor, few traditional institutions of adult education have the imputed experience and organizational capability required. Even when funding agencies choose the other extreme - to abandon professionalism in favor of establishing their own training organizations or community education agencies staffed with paraprofessionals or others untrained in adult education, a built-in unwillingness to set phased organizational objectives in favor of annual program objectives has similarly led to disappointing results.

Few major national efforts have been so victimized by the common practice of ignoring the relevance and processual nature of infrastructural objectives as has the OEO's Community Action Programs. Moynihan,[13] for example, without recourse to data on three years of operation by CAP agencies, passes an essentially negative judgment of them without noting any of the following:

- the ways in which these agencies have effected basic improvements in government services provided the poor at all levels.
- development of new career opportunities and concepts and their influence on manpower training programs.
- involvment of new professional skills and changes in institutional approaches to problems of the poor.

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13. Moynihan, Daniel P. Maximum Feasible Misunderstanding: Community Action in the War on Poverty. N.Y., The Free Press, 1969

- innovation in social programs, such as pre-school education, day care, health services, legal assistance, housing, consumer protection, job training and economic development.

- drastic changes in the social services through the introduction of neighborhood centers.

- involvement for the first time of the poor with professionals and officials in the planning process.

- involvement for the first time of the poor into public discussion and action on local decision making about community problems.

- development in poor communities of the understanding, the will and the methods to attack problems of poverty.

- development of Neighborhood organizations - in which leaders are trained and people taught participatory skills and attitudes and which provide institutional leverage for dealing with the local political and economic system - including neighborhood centers, housing corporations, tenant councils, economic co-operatives, buying clubs, credit unions and parent advisory councils.[14]

Community Action Programs are treated with comparably cavalier abandon in an evaluation recently published by the Metropolitan Applied Research Council.[15] After noting ambiguity of stated CAP goals (services, opportunities, participation and leadership of the poor) and observing implied roles (acting as mediator, fostering social cohesion and harmony, molding individual behavior and encouraging self-help) the study describes the operations of several well known urban programs and reports an evaluation of the effectiveness of anti-poverty efforts in twelve cities.

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14. Christopher Preiseth, "Moynihan's Misunderstanding", Community Development, organ of the National Association for Community Development, IV (Feb., 1969) 4-5

15. A Relevant War Against Poverty; A Study of Community Action Programs and Observable Social Change. N.Y., The Council, 60 E. 86th St., 1968.

Five judges, not all of whom had visited all cities included in the study, ranked them on the basis of subjective judgment for program effectiveness. The report cites "a surprisingly high degree of consistency resulted" in rating, a singular assertion when the mean variation among judges in ranking is 5.75 for the twelve cities, and on eight of them fewer than three judges concurred on rank order. The second ranked city involved a program which generated sufficient conflict to result in its termination, but the report states what is presumably the judges' bouyant optimism that its work "may generate its own momentum for future independent action on the part of the poor and allies of the poor." Judges were asked for their criteria in ranking; common agreement is reported on common characteristics of the five "most effective"programs. These were of the order of ambiguity of: (1) a clear statement of purposes, (2) programs relevent to these statements, (3) effective staff leadership and board, (4) early confrontation and accommodation with the local political apparatus and (5) some early evidence of "actual positive changes in the conditions of the poor" or of the poor having learned "methods and techniques by which to help themselves in the future."

Just what for the judges constituted clarity (let alone relevance, comprehensiveness, ordered progression or evolution of objectives), relevance in linking programs with objectives, or effectiveness of "leadership", why accommodation must be by confrontation, whatever that means, or what constituted early evidence of actual positive change is mercifully unspecified.

The point to be made here is that the CAP programs are complex and relatively new. They centrally involve organizational and educational

processes which are the function of the social interaction of their participants. To understand what they are and are becoming, how they are responding to the problems which confront them, how they are formulating and reformulating their objectives out of their experience and striving to achieve them can only be understood by direct, continuous field involvement by the evaluator and ideally, one equipped with dependable shared knowledge of comparable experience to guide his observations. Criteria formulated in any other way are inevitably goint to lack validity and relevance.

Elsewhere in the present volume, Strauss suggests a program evaluation role for field workers. The implication is to broaden the definition of program evaluation to include continuing processual analysis which identifies and feeds back to decision makers relevant data on factors which impede and facilitate progress in the course of a program's operation rather than presenting a report to be filed away at the conclusion of a funding period or program. For CAPs, such analyses would focus upon the process of program development evolving out of the social interaction among and within such participating groups as boards, administrators, professional staff, para-professionals, trainers and trainees, representatives of community organizations, agencies and involved state, regional and federal officials. Evaluations which purport to utilize social science methods to analyze organized efforts to effect behavioral change involving complex social interaction that do not use direct field study are patently deceptive. Development of grounded theory pertaining to community education and development would provide comparative data from which evaluation of progress in specific instances would be feasible at sharply reduced time and cost. The evaluator would know what questions

to ask and where to find answers on the basis of tested comparative experience. In a sense this generalized body of theory would constitute a set of qualitive hypotheses describing common problems and solutions which the evaluator can test against specific situations. His examination may produce new dimensions to the grounded theory, and that theory provides him an essential frame of reference for making qualitative judgments.

The approach of generating grounded theory also has substantial implications for the professional training of adult educators. Graduate programs could profitably take the generation of theory as their core curricular concept. Instead of the usual course sequences, students could be assisted to undertake comparative field studies of adult education programs. Field notes on each program that is studied would provide data for agency analyses in lieu of term paper requirements and for comparative analyses constructing grounded theory as the original research contribution of the thesis or dissertation. Seminars could be built upon field problems, field situations would provide real life case studies and student theorizing would of necessity draw upon the literature and organized experience of others in program design, administration, methodology, and sociological, historical and philosophical perspectives to construct concepts for subsequent testing in the field.

In the course of such a program, students would become intimately involved as participant observers in a wide range of programs and be encouraged in each to focus on processes of social and educational interaction which determine what the agency is and what it does. They would be encouraged continuously to interpret what they see in terms of generalizability into useful theoretical constructs and properties to be tested in other programs under study during their graduate careers. Whether

they go from the university into administrative jobs, funding agencies, consulting, teaching, training or other areas of professional endeavor, they should have equipped themselves through their own participation and self-discovery with an essential, research based, professional frame of reference upon which to build throughout their active career.

The discovery of grounded theory affords a quite unprecedented opportunity for adult educators concerned with the development of their profession. Acquisition of necessary skills should come easily to able practitioners. The richer their professional experience, the greater their contribution to theory construction and use. Our bulging library of researched program description which characterize the literature should afford an invaluable source of data for research. No high degree of aptitude nor sophistication in quantitative manipulation is required. The science and art of knowing what we see may be somewhat less exact than that available to help us see what we know, but it probably has far greater relevance to professional understanding. Mastery of the process of constructing and using grounded theory should become a sine qua non of professional competence in adult education.

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